

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8077

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 0964

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN, SU

SUBJ: SHIPPING AND SEAMEN: CRIME ON AMERICAN FLAG VESSEL

REF: KHARTOUM 0956

1. FOLLOWING ARE DETAILS OF ALLEGED CRIME ON S.S. LA SALLE.
CONSULAR OFFICER HAS RETURNED TO KHARTOUM ALONG WITH ACCUSED
SEAMAN WHO IS NOW IN LOCAL POLICE CUSTODY AT REQUEST OF AMEMBASSY.

2. THE ALLEGED OFFENDER IS IDENTIFIED AS EDWARD SCOTT COFFMAN,
SEAMAN'S CARD NO. Z [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 3 September 2013], [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 3 September 2013], ANCON,
CANAL
ZONE. COFFMAN IS U.S. CITIZEN CURRENTLY RESIDING AT 1107 CLAY
STREET, KENNER, LOUISIANA 70062. MASTER OF S.S. LA SALLE IS
GLENN D. HOPPER. OWNERS OF VESSEL ARE WATERMAN STEAMSHIP CORP.
OF NEW YORK AND NEW ORLEANS.

3. ON 3 MAY 1974, WHILE VESSEL WAS ON HIGH SEAS PROCEEDING TO
PORT SUDAN, COFFMAN AND ANOTHER ORDINARY SEAMAN, GEORGE ARMSTEAD,
JR., Z [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 3 September 2013], HAD CONFRONTATION AT CIRCA 2100 HOURS DURING
WHICH ARMSTEAD ALLEGES THT COFFMAN PULLED GUN, 25 CALIBRE COLT
AUTOMATIC (SERIAL OD 114511), AND THREATENED TO SHOOT HIM
(ARMSTEAD). ARMSTEAD FLED THIS CONFRONTATION BUT A SECOND ONE
OCCURRED AT CIRCA 2345 HOURS THE SAME EVENING. AGAIN COFFMAN
ALLEGEDLY DREW GUN ON ARMSTEAD AND SECOND SEAMAN, EDWARD A.
KING, Z [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 3 September 2013], AND THREATENED BOTH OF THEM. ARMSTEAD AND
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KING FLED AND GOT CAPTAIN HOPPER AND THE CHIEF MATE, FRANCISCO V. GARCIA. ALL FOUR WENT BACK AND CONFRONTED COFFMAN, WITH CAPTAIN HOPPER HOLDING HIM AT GUNPOINT. COFFMAN'S GUN WAS FOUND ON DECK NEAR HIM. CAPTAIN ORDERED COFFMAN DETAINED UNDER GUARD AND CONFISCATED GUN WHICH HE IS CURRENTLY HOLDING FOR ARRIVAL IN UNITED STATES PORT CIRCA JULY 1974.

4. COFFMAN DISPUTES ARMSTEAD AND KING VERSION AND STATES THAT THEY THREATENED HIM AND HE ONLY TRIED TO DEFEND HIMSELF. COFFMAN ADMITS TO POSSESSION OF THE COLT PISTOL.

5. CAPTAIN HOPPER INSISTED ON REMOVAL OF COFFMAN FOR SHIP'S AND CREW'S SAFETY STATING HE LACKED SECURE DETENTION FACILITIES. CONSULAR OFFICER TOOK SWORN STATEMENTS FROM CAPTAIN, COFFMAN, ARMSTEAD, KING, GARCIA, AND ONE JOSEPH L. SIDOR, Z [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 3 September 2013], WHO IS PARTIAL WITNESS FOR COFFMAN. BASED ON STATEMENTS AND DISCUSSION WITH CAPTAIN AND WATERMAN CORP. REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT ON SHIP, CONSULAR OFFICER CONCURRED IN REMOVAL OF COFFMAN FOR DETENTION AND ULTIMATE RETURN TO UNITED STATES.

6. SUDANESE POLICE AUTHORITIES PROVIDED DETENTION FACILITIES AND ASSISTED IN TRANSPORTING OF COFFMAN TO GHARTOUM. KHARTOUM AUTHORITIES ARE CURRENTLY HOLDING COFFMAN IN KOBOR PRISON AT REQUEST OF AMEMBASSY AD DETAILED IN NOTE TO FOREIGN MINISTRY.

7. SS LA SALLE SAILED FROM PORTISUDAN AT 1230 HOURS 5 MAY AND IS SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE IN KHARACHI IN THREE WEEKS WITH ULTIMATE RETURN TO NEW ORLEANS CIRCA JULY 1974. CAPTAIN STATED HE COULD NOT HOLD COFFMAN ON SHIPBOARD AND NO OTHER AMERICAN FLAG VESSELS ARE AVAILABLE IN VICINITY TO ASSIST IN TRANSPORTING COFFMAN TO UNITED STATES.

8. REQUEST BE ADVISED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AS TO JUST WHAT WE SHOULD DO WITH COFFMAN AND WHAT ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE FOR HSI RETURN TO UNITED STATES. AMEMBASSY BELIEVES ONLY REASONABLE MEANS OF TRANSPORTING HIM WILL BE VIA AIR AND PRESUMABLY UNDER GUARD.
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